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ABSTRACT

In 1973, the Polish Minister of Education ordered objective competitions at the primary school level in the fields of Polish studies, Russian language, and math. In order to determine whether such subject competitions were justified and if they contributed equally to the development of interests and abilities among the rural and urban and culturally deprived and privileged students, all provincial competitions in Polish studies and math from the graduate classes of the 1976 primary schools were evaluated via inquiries collected from 5,500 participants and 80 competition organizers. Data from 30 math and 20 Polish studies competitions were analyzed. Results indicated: provinces differed in the degree of competition participation; given their proportion of the total population, rural youth were under-represented by more than two to one; among the rural students, the peasants participated the least, not competing at all in the southwest provinces; none of the 50 competitions was won by a peasant child. It was concluded that the competitions constituted a viable motivational method aimed at self-perfection which provided opportunity for self-assessment in terms of knowledge and competitiveness, particularly among the rural students, but it was suggested that the educational authorities attempt to equalize the rural/urban educational opportunities. (JC)

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FOURTH WORLD CONGRESS OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY

NINTH EUROPEAN CONGRESS OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY

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Torun, Poland

THEME:

The Integrated Development of Human and Natural Resources: The Contribution of Rural Sociology

Seminar 15: Rural Youth: Human Resource or Human Burden?

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POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Social Obstacles Towards Success of Pupils in Polish Primary Schools

by Zofia Nakielska

On November 5th, 1973 an order was promulgated by the Polish Minister of Education J.Kuberski on organizing objective competitions in the field of Polish studies, Russian language and mathematics for pupils of primary schools in Poland. For many schools the order was only a formal approbation of their current activities. For instance this year the 11th mathematical competition was held in the Warsaw province /in the Szczecin and Katowice provinces the 8th and 16th, respectively/. The competitions in Polish studies, biology etc. are of a slightly shorter tradition in these provinces. The above-mentioned provinces, however, lead the way in this respect. There are, however, regions in this country where hardly any objective competitions have been organized. For these the implementing order serves a mobilizing factor. Data from the Ministry of Education indicate that almost all provinces organized Polish studies, Russian language and mathematical competitions this year while 10 to 80 per cent of them held competitions in other fields /history, geography, physics, biology, chemistry, art etc./

It is generally acknowledged that these competitions play a vital role in arousing and developing an interest among the pupils for a given subject, and that they increase the knowledge and skills associated with this subject, ensuring longer retention of ther knowledge and these skills and stimulating the in inseginstion.

The Institute of Rural and Agriculture Development of the

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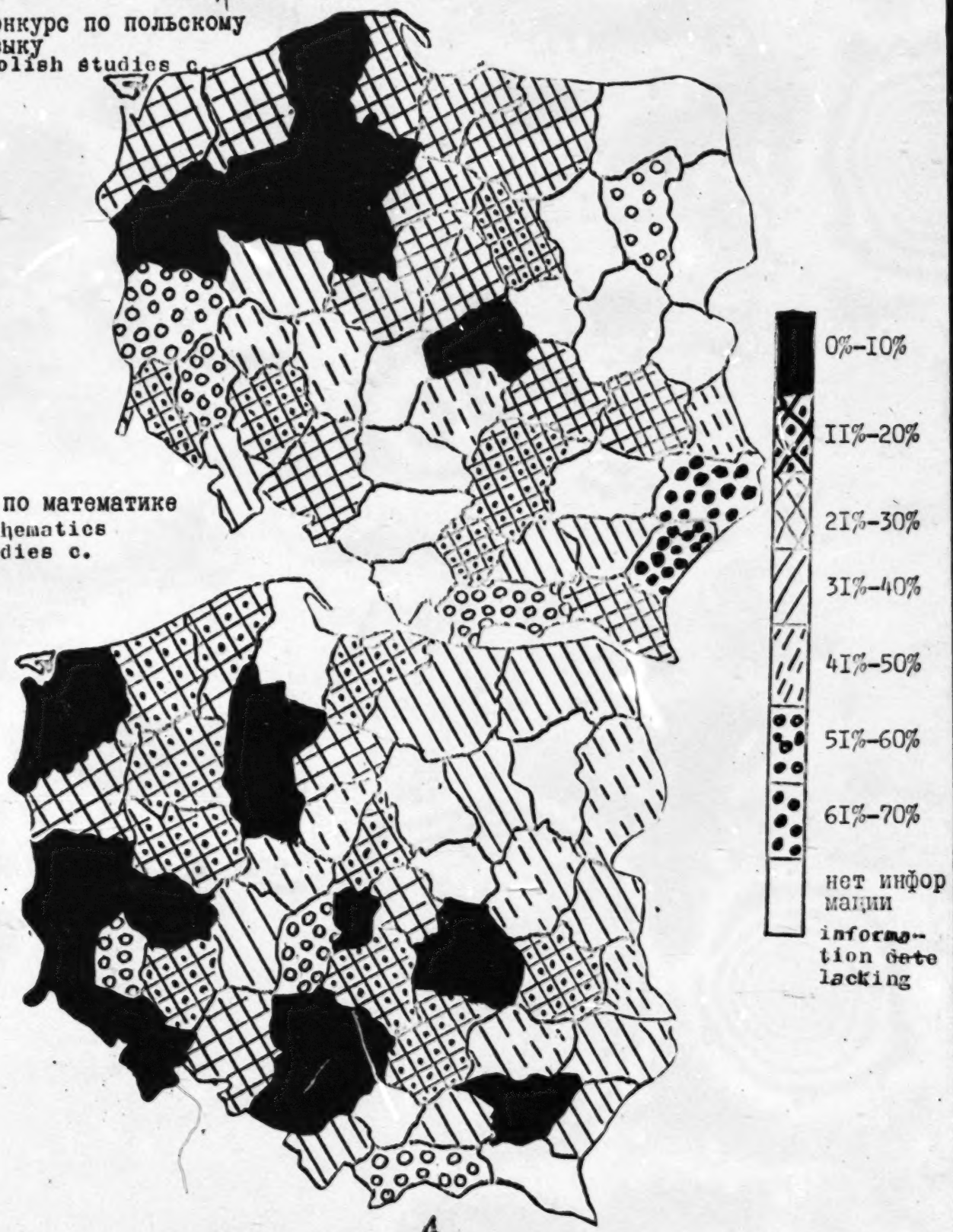
Соотношение учащихся-участников конкурсов /8-ой класс/ крестянского происхождения с общим каличеством крестьянской молодежы в 8-ых классах

The ratio of the percentage of peasant youths taking part in provincial competition for eight-grade pupils to the their percentage in the whole population of eight-grade pupils



Polish Academy of Sciences has resolved to verify empirically the extent to which these current opinions concerning the subject competitions are justified and if they contribute equally to arousing and developing interests and abilities of the rural and urban students, coming from peasant and worker and those students coming from socially and culturally privileged backgrounds. For that purpose, all provincial competitions in Polish studies and mathematics for pupils of graduate classes of primary schools held in this country in 1976 were tested under the supervision of Professor Dr.M.Kozakiewicz. So far, about 5,500 inquiries have been collected from the participants in the competitions which equals 94 per cent of the population to be investigated. Also collected have been 80 views about the competitions from their organizers as well as the regulations and themes that structure them. Because of the incompleteness of some of the materials /e.g.the lack of point counting/ only data from 30 competitions in mathematics and 20 in Polish studies have been analysed. From these data the following conclusions and remarks can be drawn:

Various provincial competitions differ in the number of participants. The most numerously contested are the competitions in the formerly-existing provinces, the least numerous are the contestants in the newly-organized ones. Never the less, even in this respect there are exceptions to the rule, e.g.in the Bydgoszcz province 29 pupils took part in the Polish studies competition while there were as many as 70 in the Krosno province. The contestants were predominantly of urban origin. Rural students were under represented by more than twice than one would expect from their proportion of the total youth population from eight class.

Among the rural students the least to participate were the peasant children. In the southwest provinces they avoided the competitions completely. None of the fifty competitions was won by a peasant child, and only in three aout of thirty mathematical studier and seven out of twenty Polish studies contests were peasant children represented among the prize winners. Therefore, our studies have not confirmed the view that rural students have better chances for success in studies of a mathematical nature rather than a humane one.

The rare participation or actual absence of rural and peasant students in the competitions occurred in the highly,urbanize provinces as well as in those provinces where they had adopted as the criterion of promotion for the final provincial competition the number of points won in the local contests. Inversely, a high degree of participation of those students occurred in the lowly-urbanized provinces as well as in those where, as a rule, the winners of the local contests were being promoted for the higher-grade competition, even if they should get an inferior score of points for their contest work.

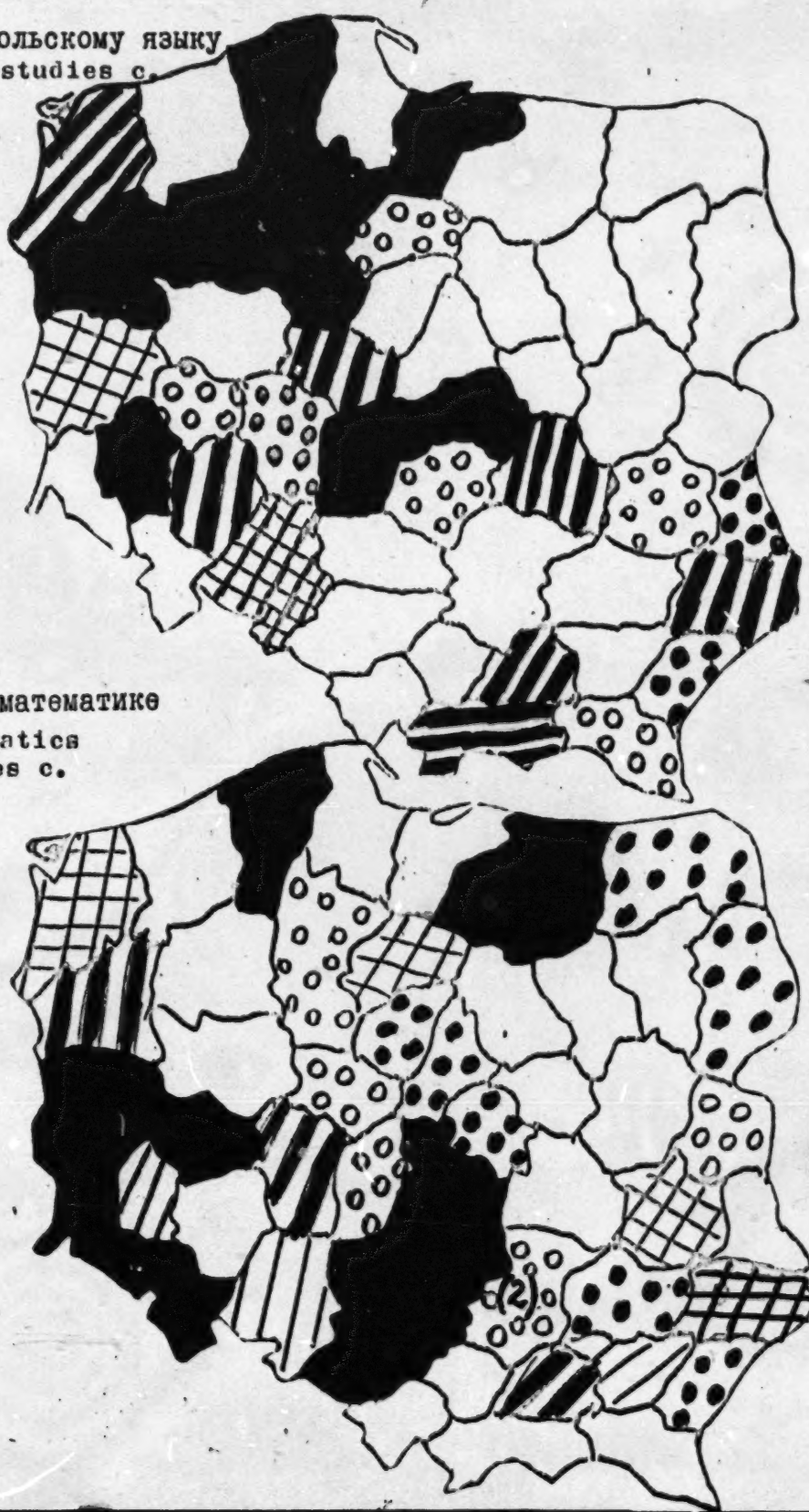
In our view, the latter system of promoting pupils for the final competition better served the purpose which had been proposed to competition organizers by the Ministry of Education in an order dated July 5th, 1973 which states: "The aim of an objective competition is to arouse and stimulate an interest in a given subject among pupils of primary schools, to uplift their capabilities and to better prepare graduates for further schooling." In the view of the Ministry of Education, therefore, a competition should be a tool for stimulating development and not for a mere estimation of the pupils actual capabilities which is

Самое лучшее место участника воеводского конкурса крестянского происхождения

The best place won by a participant of peasant origin in provintial competition

к. по польскому языку
Polish studies c.

к. по математике
mathematics studies c.



нет информации
information date lacking
I место
I place 1-4
II место
II place 2-4
III место
III place 3-4
IV место
IV place 4-4
V место
V place 5-4
VI место или нет участников крестянского происх.
VI place or contestant of peasant origin lacking

implicated in the former promotion system.

The participation in the competition itself helps the pupils learn how to be competitive, gives them an opportunity to assess their own strenght and abilities, as wellse permitting them to find out failings and shortcomings in their knowledge. For the rural students it is, at the same time, the first opportunity to recognize the requirements they will have to meet in high school. Also it is an opportunity to compare their abilities with thoes of the urban students. Consequently, the competitions are and educational method of motivsting the pupils to perfect themselves rather than an opportunity for the inspector-general's offices to assess if the schools are functioning well, even though the latter aim can also be realized so long as it does no harm to the superior goal.

No promotion rule, by it-self, can secure the equality of opportunities for students from different social classes. As mentioned above, the rural children have the least chances for success in the competitions, especially the peasant children. Their chances diminish as the urbanization of the given region increases. Consequently, the school and educational authorities should take steps to prevent the inferiority of opportunities of countryside youths from deepening further. They should provide what is essential to the development of a child if its own family is not able to do so /e.g. a place to study at home, books and consultations/.

We are well aware that the school cannot compensate fully for for all the shortcomings of the family background. Yet the full equality of opportunities for these youths will be attainable only if the social, cultural and even emotional life conditions were equalized for all children. Since this does not seem to be possible in the foreseeable future, it should be the politicians' goal not to let the inequalities grow.